

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, and 7 are currently amended. Applicant respectfully submits that the amendments herein are fully supported by the Specification as originally filed and do not introduce new matter.

Examiner's Interview

Applicant's representative respectfully thanks Examiner Aaron M. Dunwoody for the courtesy of discussing the Information Disclosure Statement filed with the present application on September 24, 2003 in a telephonic Examiner's interview on September 13, 2004, initiated by Applicant's representative. During the interview, Examiner Dunwoody explained that the Norwesco, Inc. reference listed on the 1449 form was illegible and therefore not considered. Examiner Dunwoody indicated that a legible copy would be considered.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Norwesco, Inc. reference listed on the 1449 Form filed with the present application on September 24, 2003 was not considered because the Examiner was unable to see the details of the reference. Applicant is submitting the original of the copy of the Norwesco, Inc. reference listed on the 1449 Form filed with the present application on September 24, 2003. Applicant believes that since this reference was cited on the 1449 Form filed with the present application on September 24, 2003, another 1449 Form and an Information Disclosure Statement is not required. However, if the Examiner feels that it is necessary to submit another 1449 Form and an Information Disclosure Statement for the original of the copy of the Norwesco, Inc. reference, Applicant will gladly do so.

Drawings

Applicant believes that the drawing, as amended, overcomes the objection thereto.

Specification

The disclosure was objected to because the Examiner indicated that the disclosure recites a hole 36 and a hole 134 and contended that both cannot be correct. Applicant carefully reviewed the disclosure as filed and found no occurrences of a hole 36. If the Examiner finds any occurrences of a hole 36, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to indicate the numbers of the paragraphs containing the occurrences, and applicant will gladly amend them.

Applicant did, however, find several occurrences of a hole 136 in the disclosure. Applicant contends that a hole 136 and a hole 134 can both be correct because holes 136 and 134 are shown in Figure 1 and are explained in paragraph [0017] of the disclosure. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the disclosure be removed.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 3-9, were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hawkins (U.S. Patent No. 5,971,444). Applicant respectfully traverses.

Claim 1, as currently amended, is directed to a tank fitting that includes a coupling having a flange between a first end and a second end of the coupling, external threads disposed between the flange and the first end, and a male-end region adjacent the second end adapted to be received within a fitting or a pipe. The tank fitting further includes a nut that is threadably attachable to the external threads of the coupling.

Hawkins does not include coupling having external threads disposed between a flange and the first end and a male-end region adjacent the second end adapted to be received within a fitting or a pipe and a nut that is threadably attachable to the external threads, as claim 1. As shown in Figures 1-3, Hawkins includes a through wall connector assembly 10 having a male member 12 and a female member (a nut) 14. The male member 12 has an annular flange 20 between a nipple 22 and an externally threaded portion 26 of the male member 12. The female member (nut) 14 is threaded onto the externally threaded portion 26, a first section 36 of a conduit, pipe, or line is inserted into the threaded portion of the male member 12, and a second section 38 of a conduit, pipe, or line is inserted into the nipple 22 of the male member 12. Therefore, Hawkins does not include each and every element of claim 1, so claim 1 should be allowed.

Claims 3-9 depend directly or indirectly from claim 1 and thus include patentable limitations of claim 1. Therefore, claims 3-9 should be allowed.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 2 and 10-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hawkins (U.S. Patent No. 5,971,444) in view of Jones (U.S. Patent No. 2,554,622). Applicant respectfully traverses.

Claim 1, as currently amended, is patentably distinct from Hawkins. Moreover, Hawkins in combination with Jones fails to overcome the deficiencies of Hawkins with respect to claim 1. That is, Hawkins in combination with Jones does not include or suggest a coupling having external threads disposed between a flange and the first end and a male-end region adjacent the second end adapted to be received within a fitting or a pipe and a nut that is threadably attachable to the external threads, as claim 1. Therefore, claim 1 is allowable over Hawkins in view of Jones. Claim 2 depends directly from claim 1 and thus includes patentable limitations of claim 1. Therefore, claim 2 is allowable over Hawkins in view of Jones.

Claim 10 is directed to a tank fitting that includes a flange between a first end and a second end of the fitting, a gasket disposed between the flange and the first end so as to abut the flange, and a stud protruding from a face of the flange toward the first end and passing completely through the gasket.

Hawkins does not include a stud protruding from a face of the flange toward the first end and passing completely through a gasket disposed between the flange and the first end so as to abut the flange. Jones includes a seal 14 having a flange 16 (Figure 1), a seal 27 having a flange 28 (Figure 2), a seal 63 having a flange 65 (Figure 3), a seal 48 having a flange 52 (Figure 4), a flanged seal 71 (Figure 5), and a flanged seal 92 (Figure 7). As respectively shown Figures 1, 2, and 4, flanges 16, 28, and 52 do not include a stud, as in claim 10. Rather, Figures 1, 2, and 4 respectively show pins 18, 31, and 55 extending from a housing (or chamber) respectively through flanges 16, 28, and 52, which is different from claim 10 that includes a flange having a stud protruding from a face of the flange. As respectively shown in Figures 5 and 7, flanged seals 71 and 92 do not include a stud, as in claim 10. Rather, in Figure 5, a projection or pin 74 extends from a housing (or chamber) through flanged seal 71, and in Figure 7, a pin 97 extends from a housing (or chamber) through flanged seal 72, which is different from claim 10 that includes a flange having a stud protruding from a face of the flange. As shown in Figure 3 and discussed in column 5, lines 11-31, flange 65 of seal 63 has an extension 68 that enters a recess 69 in a wall 66. However, the flange is part of the seal, which is different from claim 10, in that claim 10 includes a flange and a gasket disposed between the flange and the first end so as to abut the flange. Applicant contends that modifying Hawkins to include Jones would involve replacing flange 20 and first seal 16 of Hawkins with the flexible seal 63 of Jones having a flange 65 with an extension 68, since seal 16 would no longer be needed. This is different than

claim 10. Therefore, neither Hawkins nor Jones, alone or in combination, include or suggest each and every element of claim 10, so claim 10 should be allowed.

Claims 11-13 depend directly or indirectly from claim 10 and thus include patentable limitations of claim 10. Therefore, claims 11-13 should be allowed.

Claims 14 and 20 each include threading a nut of a tank fitting on external threads of a coupling of the tank fitting so that the nut engages an exterior surface of a tank so as to squeeze a gasket between a flange of the coupling and the interior surface of the tank so that the gasket forms a liquid-tight seal around a hole in the tank between the tank and the flange.

Hawkins does not include threading a nut of a tank fitting on external threads of a coupling of the tank fitting so that the nut engages an exterior surface of a tank so as to squeeze a gasket between a flange of the coupling and the interior surface of the tank, as in each of claims 14 and 20. Rather Hawkins threads a female member (a nut) 12 on external threads 26 of a male member 12 so that female member engages a second seal 18 (not an exterior surface of a tank, as in each of claims 14 and 20) to slightly compress a first seal 16 between a flange 20 of male member 20 and an exterior of a wall 40 (see Figure 3 and column 3, lines 7-16). Moreover, Hawkins in combination with Jones fails to overcome the deficiencies of Hawkins with respect to each of claims 14 and 20. That is, Hawkins in combination with Jones does not include or suggest threading a nut of a tank fitting on external threads of a coupling of the tank fitting so that the nut engages an exterior surface of a tank so as to squeeze a gasket between a flange of the coupling and the interior surface of the tank, as in each of claims 14 and 20. Therefore, claims 14 and 20 are allowable over Hawkins in view of Jones.

Claims 15-19 depend directly or indirectly from claim 14 and thus include patentable limitations of claim 14. Claims 21-27 depend directly or indirectly from claim 20 and thus include patentable limitations of claim 20. Therefore, claims 15-19 and claims 21-27 should be allowed.


CONCLUSION

Claims 1, 3, and 7 are currently amended. No new matter has been added and no additional fee is required by this response. In view of the above remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and requests reconsideration of the application and allowance of claims.

If the Examiner has any questions or concerns regarding this application, please contact the undersigned at (612) 312-2208.

Respectfully submitted,

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 has been amended to include a bracket that embraces the components of Figure 1, as recommended by the Examiner. The amendment is shown in the attached annotated marked-up drawing sheet and is included in the attached replacement sheet.

